

No Second Night Out Greater Manchester and Street Buddies

An Evaluation for Riverside



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About the authors

The Sustainable Housing & Urban Studies Unit is a dedicated multi-disciplinary research and consultancy unit providing a range of services relating to housing and urban management to public and private sector clients. The Unit brings together researchers drawn from a range of disciplines including: social policy, housing management, urban geography, environmental management, psychology, social care and social work.

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This report is based on research undertaken by the study team and the analysis and comment thereafter do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of the research commissioners, or any participating stakeholders and agencies. The authors take responsibility for any inaccuracies or omissions in the report.

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Glossary

Term	Explanation
AGMA	Association of Greater Manchester Authorities
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
GROW	Giving Real Opportunities For Work: A scheme which provides opportunities for people who have previously been homeless to gain paid work experience
GMRSF	Greater Manchester Rough Sleepers Forum
HTF	Homelessness Transition Fund. An independent fund that aims to protect essential services for homeless people, encourage innovation and support communities to adopt the 'No Second Night Out' standard. Administered by Homeless Link and supported by Department for Communities and Local Government
NSNO	No Second Night Out
Priority need	An individual who presents as homeless to the local council can only be provided with emergency accommodation if they are assessed as being legally homeless i.e. have no other form of accommodation in the UK or elsewhere, and have a priority need. Priority need categories include but are not exclusive to pregnant women, care leavers, people responsible for dependent children and other people considered to be vulnerable.
Project 394	NSNO Emergency accommodation located in Manchester
SHUSU	Sustainable Housing and Urban Studies Unit, University of Salford
Street Buddies	An outreach service which works with entrenched rough sleepers and supports them to re-engage with services

Executive Summary

The Evaluation

No Second Night Out Greater Manchester (NSNO GM) was set up in 2012 as part of a nationwide response to the Coalition Government's Strategy to end rough sleeping: *Vision to end rough sleeping: No Second Night Out Nationwide* (DCLG, 2011). NSNO GM works to prevent rough sleeping by targeting support at people who are new to rough sleeping. NSNO GM is based in Manchester and acts as a focal point for the Greater Manchester area. The NSNO GM outreach team – based with Riverside - assesses the needs of new rough sleepers and links them to emergency accommodation.

In addition to NSNO GM, Riverside also run a peer mentoring service called Street Buddies, which focuses on entrenched rough sleepers with more complex needs, who are not appropriate for the NSNO support. Together, these two services provide a range of support to homeless individuals across Greater Manchester.

In October 2013, Riverside commissioned the Sustainable Housing & Urban Studies Unit (SHUSU) at the University of Salford to carry out a rapid evaluation of NSNO GM and the Street Buddies peer mentoring service. The evaluation was undertaken by reviewing the following data sources:

- Existing secondary data relating to NSNO GM;
- Interviews with eight key stakeholders; and
- Interviews with 13 service users

The fieldwork took place over a four week period between December 2013 and January 2014.

Key Findings

The following outlines some of the key findings drawing upon the issues central to the experience of service users and service providers of NSNO and Street Buddies.

Service Users

- Many of the service users interviewed were new to sleeping on the streets when they encountered NSNO GM. However a significant number did not fit the categories of 'new rough sleeper' or 'entrenched rough sleeper' and fell somewhere in between these categories. For example, some clients had slept on the streets before, others had been sleeping rough for a few weeks or months. Some service users had complex needs and therefore needed support beyond the provision of accommodation.
- Interviews with service users indicated that NSNO GM's phone line and outreach team were efficient and responsive. All of the service users were contacted by NSNO GM within 24 hours of being referred and were linked into accommodation.
- Service users highlighted that they were linked in to accommodation very quickly; five out of the 13 service users interviewed were placed in Bed and Breakfasts or hostels due to a lack of availability within appropriate emergency accommodation.

- Service users indicated that in some cases workers provided additional support in order to help them secure accommodation. In particular, service users underlined the importance of NSNO GM's early intervention in supporting them to find accommodation and highlighted the commitment that the NSNO GM team had shown in terms of supporting them to find longer term solutions which enabled them to get their lives 'back on track'.
- All of the service users interviewed had managed to maintain their accommodation since the intervention by NSNO GM and were either living in temporary accommodation or had secured a long term tenancy.

Stakeholders

- Interviews with service providers indicated that NSNO GM is an efficient and responsive service that responds to referrals quickly.
- NSNO GM received most of its referrals from other service providers but they were also received from members of the public as well as homeless people themselves. This suggests that NSNO GM has been effective in promoting its work to a range of service providers and members of the public.
- The process of finding people on the streets, once they had been referred to NSNO GM and then verifying them as rough sleepers, was identified as a challenge by service providers and NSNO GM representatives and an aspect of the project that needed further development.
- The lack of emergency accommodation in certain GM local authorities was identified as a major challenge for the project and for tackling rough sleeping in the area more generally. However findings show that NSNO GM has made progress on this issue since its inception in 2012 due to its commitment to building relationships with local authorities and more effective pathways to emergency accommodation.
- NSNO GM was identified by stakeholder organisations as playing a key role in driving the agenda for the prevention of rough sleeping. Stakeholders commented on the project's success in bringing different agencies together, facilitating better communication and developing partnerships at a strategic and operational level. NSNO GM's role in setting up and facilitating the Greater Manchester Rough Sleepers Forum was highlighted as a positive example of this.
- The ability of NSNO GM to work flexibly with a diversity of people with varying needs was identified as one of its strengths but also indicated the range of people who are not eligible for support and continue to sleep rough, such as certain migrant groups
- NSNO GM's work to build the capacity of ex- rough sleepers by providing them with opportunities for volunteering and paid work was noted as a particular example of innovative practice which was successful for the project and for the individuals involved.
- The Street Buddies outreach team was identified as an important bridge between services for those people for more entrenched rough sleepers. However there was some confusion from stakeholders about the remit of the project and how it worked with the NSNO GM outreach team.

1. Introduction

Background

In 2011, the Coalition Government outlined its commitment to end rough sleeping in the document: *Vision to end rough sleeping: No Second Night Out Nationwide* (DCLG, 2011). This document outlined a cross-departmental strategy, which focused particularly on preventative work with single people who had recently been made homeless, and who were unable to access other services because they were not in 'priority need'¹.

The Government's strategy is underpinned by the recognition that rough sleeping may be avoided if people are able to access support at an early stage, avoiding the potential downward spiral that more entrenched rough sleepers can often experience. The Government's vision was encapsulated in the following aims:

- To support people to move off the streets immediately and access a place of safety.
- To support rough sleepers to access emergency accommodation and the support services they need.
- To support rough sleepers from outside the area to reconnect to a place where they can get housing and support.
- To provide support which will enable service users to secure and maintain accommodation
- To raise awareness of rough sleeping amongst the public and to encourage members of the public to refer people for help (DCLG, 2011)

In response to the Government's strategy, the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA) funded Riverside from April 2012 to deliver a No Second Night Out (NSNO) pilot project in Greater Manchester. The aim was to develop an infrastructure to enable all ten local authorities to identify and support new rough sleepers to immediately come off the streets and access accommodation. Following the success of the pilot project, the initiative received further funding from the Homelessness Transition Fund (HTF) to fund the project until 1st March 2014. This funding enabled the project to increase the number of outreach workers and introduce a seven day rota. AGMA has recently approved further funding for NSNO until March 2015 (although this will require a reduction in the size of the team).

In addition to NSNO GM, Riverside also run a peer mentoring service called Street Buddies, which focuses on entrenched rough sleepers with more complex needs, who are not appropriate for the NSNO support. Together, these two services provide a range of support to homeless individuals across Greater Manchester targeting both new and entrenched rough sleeping.

¹ The Housing Act 2006 states that a local authority must assess an individual as in priority need before they can be provided with emergency accommodation. Priority need categories include: pregnant women, care leavers, people responsible for dependent children and other people considered to be vulnerable For more information see:

http://england.shelter.org.uk/get_advice/homelessness/help_from_the_council_when_homeless/priority_need

In October 2013 Riverside commissioned the Sustainable Housing & Urban Studies Unit (SHUSU) at the University of Salford to carry out a rapid evaluation of NSNO GM and the Street Buddies initiative. This rapid evaluation aimed to provide Riverside with a greater understanding of the effectiveness of the projects, particularly from the perspective of stakeholders and service users. This report outlines the findings of the evaluation.

Overview of No Second Night Out Greater Manchester (NSNO GM)

NSNO GM is based at Riverside in Manchester but covers all ten local authorities in Greater Manchester (Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan). The premises at Riverside operate as a hub through which homelessness referrals are received from service providers, members of the public and homeless people themselves.

NSNO GM operates a telephone referral line based at the Riverside call centre in Speke, a website for online referrals and an email address to which referrals can be sent. Referrals are received by the NSNO GM outreach team which works on a seven day rota to identify and respond to referrals, with the aim of making contact with homeless people within twenty four hours. Under HTF funding, NSNO GM has recruited additional members of staff and moved to conducting outreach seven days a week with the aim of reaching more people in a shorter space of time. Once referrals are received by NSNO GM, outreach workers then carry out assessments with individuals in order to gain a better understanding of their situation. The aim is to link them straight back into accommodation or reconnect them with their family. If they come from outside Greater Manchester and do not have a local connection² work is undertaken to link them with other support networks as appropriate.

An evaluation of NSNO GM was conducted by Riverside after the project's first six months in operation.³ This initial evaluation highlighted that a number objectives had been achieved since the project was implemented, including the following:

- Setting up the NSNO GM phone line and training staff to deal with calls appropriately;
- Extensive project promotion through posters and cards across Greater Manchester (including a QR scanner containing information about the project and how to make a referral);
- Setting up a NSNO GM web page designed to provide information about the service and how to make a referral;
- Setting up an email address and Twitter address to encourage referrals from members of the public;
- Training and awareness raising with local authorities, businesses, and agencies cross Greater Manchester;
- Partnership building with local authorities to identify emergency accommodation pathways and to share information about the NSNO preventative approach;
- Partnership building with existing homelessness services to ensure that NSNO GM's work was able to compliment and existing work; and
- Recruitment and training of thirty NSNO Volunteers.

2 A local connection refers to the assessment that local authorities make when deciding whether they can support an individual with a homelessness application or whether this is the responsibility of another local authority. Points such as how long someone has lived in the area, and whether they have family and work in the area are all considered. For more information visit:
http://england.shelter.org.uk/get_advice/homelessness/help_from_the_council_when_homeless/local_connection#do_you_have_a_local_connection%3F

3 Available online at <http://www.riverside.org.uk/pdf/NSNO%20report%20-%20single%20pages.pdf>

Data from the evaluation of the first six months of NSNO GM (April – October 2012) showed that:

- NSNO GM received 333 referrals; 217 of these were identified as needing an assessment from the NSNO GM outreach team. Of this 217, a total of 190 people were linked into NSNO GM and an initial assessment took place.
- 82 out of the 190 people were accommodated.
- 61 out of the 190 disengaged from the service. For example, they did not turn up to emergency accommodation or were not verified as rough sleeping (see Chapter Four for a discussion of verification)
- 136 people did not fit the criteria because they were not new rough sleepers. However, NSNO GM signposted these individuals to other relevant services.

This initial evaluation made the following recommendations for the project:

- Continuing to raise awareness of NSNO GM amongst agencies and the general public;
- Continuing to develop partnerships across the ten GM authorities to improve emergency accommodation provision;
- Developing links with private landlords to improve opportunities for housing rough sleepers with low or no support needs; and
- Working with local authorities in GM to create further opportunities for people to be reconnected with family or friends in the area they came from.

Volunteers, Giving Real Opportunities For Work (GROW) Trainees and Street Buddies

The NSNO GM project also undertakes capacity building for those who have experienced homelessness, and aims to provide opportunities to develop new skills and the potential to gain employment. Consequently, volunteers contribute to NSNO GM by working alongside the outreach team and are recruited from a wide variety of backgrounds. As 'experts through experience' these volunteers are well placed to engage with, and motivate people, who may have had similar experiences to them.

In addition to volunteering opportunities, NSNO GM also operates a GROW trainee scheme (Giving Real Opportunities For Work). This provides people who have previously been homeless with paid work experience. Trainees are employed for ten months and work across a number of different services delivered by Riverside. Two people are currently in these roles at NSNO GM.

Furthermore, a Peer Mentoring service called Street Buddies works alongside NSNO GM at Riverside to address the needs of longer term, entrenched rough sleepers with more complex needs. This team was set up in response to the significant numbers of people the NSNO GM team encountered who were not appropriate for NSNO support but who the team felt it was essential to help reengage with basic services such as health. While NSNO GM and Street Buddies are in effect two separate services with different outreach teams, they are designed to work together. Together they focus on preventative work with new rough sleepers and targeted work with individuals who are engaging in street activities such as begging, drinking, street drug use and long-term rough sleeping.

Structure of this report

This report provides an overview of the rapid evaluation of NSNO GM It focuses on the work of the NSNO GM outreach team, explores the experiences of service users who have recently received

support from the service as well as perceptions of the service from stakeholder organisations. The report is structured in the following way:

- **Chapter 2** outlines the research methods used to conduct the rapid evaluation and describes the three phases of research.
- **Chapter 3** presents an analysis of the findings from interviews conducted with service users and focuses on their experiences of receiving support from NSNO GM.
- **Chapter 4** presents an analysis of the findings from interviews conducted with stakeholder organisations and NSNO GM representatives and focuses on NSNO GM operations and outcomes, as well as a discussion of the Street Buddies initiative.
- **Chapter 5** brings together the conclusions from the findings.

2. Methods

The rapid evaluation involved three separate but interrelated phases of data collection:

- Phase one: Review of existing project data and other relevant literature
- Phase two: Consultation with key stakeholders
- Phase three: Consultation with service users

Each of these phases is described in more detail below.

Phase one: Review of existing project data and other relevant literature

This initial phase involved reviewing a wide range of information relating to the NSNO GM project, but also broader homelessness policy. It included an analysis of existing project data both qualitative and quantitative. This included the NSNO GM pilot evaluation, a NSNO GM monitoring report, and NSNO GM quarterly statistics. External policy documents and reports such as *Vision to end rough sleeping: NSNO Nationwide* (DCLG 2011) and *Making every contact count: a joint approach to preventing homelessness* (DCLG 2012) were consulted in order to contextualise the project within broader homelessness policy.

Phase two: Consultation with stakeholders

This phase involved carrying out semi-structured interviews with selected stakeholders. This was divided between two different groups. The first group of stakeholders consisted of NSNO GM staff, a volunteer and a GROW Trainee. The interviews with staff focused on understanding the aims and objectives of the project; the key indicators of success; perceived successes and challenges of the project; strategic and operational issues; and the policy context within which the project operates. The volunteer and GROW Trainee were interviewed in relation to how they had become involved in the project; their experiences of working on the project; the training and support they received; and their overall view of NSNO GM as an initiative. Three interviews were conducted with NSNO GM representatives in total.

The second group of stakeholders consisted of organisations working with NSNO GM. Five semi-structured interviews were conducted with individuals representing five separate organisations in Manchester. The participants included representatives of drop-in centres, as well as people in strategic positions within AGMA. These interviews focused on exploring their understanding of both the NSNO outreach team and the Street Buddies outreach team; perceived successes and challenges of the project; and perceived gaps in service delivery.

Given that there was a four week period for fieldwork, a mixture of face-to-face and telephone interviews were carried out. This provided greater flexibility for the individual respondents in terms of availability.

Phase three: Consultation with service users

This phase involved carrying out semi-structured interviews with service users who had been supported by NSNO GM. In order to carry out this consultation, the NSNO GM team identified 20 people and contacted them to inform them that the evaluation was taking place and to invite their participation. Following this the research team contacted service users to provide further details

about the evaluation, to establish whether or not they wanted to take part. A total of 13 people agreed to participate and were interviewed. None of the service users who agreed to be interviewed had received support from the Street Buddies outreach team. Consequently, the service user interviews discussed in this report focus on the support received by NSNO GM.

It was initially anticipated that all interviews with service users would be carried out face-to-face in a place that was comfortable for the participants. A number of interviews were therefore carried out at a drop-in centre in Manchester city centre and at Project 394, the location of the NSNO GM offices and the emergency accommodation provider. However, in some cases it was difficult to make appointments and secure attendance at specific locations. Given the fieldwork period available for the evaluation, the research team therefore decided to provide more flexibility to respondents by offering the option of telephone interviews, which proved preferable for some. The service users were interviewed about their situation at the time that they received support; their overall experience of receiving support from NSNO GM; their reflections on the impact of the support; and any perceived gaps in the support that was provided.

All of the interviews – stakeholder and service users - were audio recorded, with the consent of the participant. The service users who participated received a £10 shopping voucher and travel expenses to compensate them for the time taken to contribute to the project.

All interviews were transcribed verbatim and analysed thematically with reference to the key aims and objectives of the project.

3. Findings: Service users

This chapter provides an analysis of the interviews carried out with thirteen service users supported by the NSNO GM project. It focuses on the key findings that emerged from the data in relation to their experiences of accessing the NSNO GM project; their perceptions of the support they received; and its impact. Please note that pseudonyms have been used to protect the anonymity of the respondents.

A different client group?

As highlighted in the introduction one of the key aims of NSNO GM is to prevent people who are new to the streets from becoming entrenched rough sleepers. This early intervention is seen as vital in order to avoid a further deterioration in circumstances that can occur as a result of longer term rough sleeping. Subsequently the people who are NSNO GM service users tend to have different characteristics than more entrenched rough sleepers with more complex needs. As one stakeholder representative explained:

“I think in the first year, certainly, we were surprised at the amount of people that came through who were very recently in jobs or still in jobs and desperately trying to hold onto their jobs with really nothing else going on for them apart from a relationship break down or something like that...You just wouldn't know when they are walking down the streets... Sometimes they are walking around with suitcases. It just looks like someone's been on holiday.” (Stakeholder representative)

With regards to the service users interviewed eight out of the thirteen had never been homeless or slept rough before. The remaining five service users had experienced homelessness in the past, but did not fit in to the category of 'entrenched rough sleepers'. Interviews with service users highlighted the varying circumstances that had led to their homelessness. For example, some had experienced relationship breakdowns, while others had arrived in Manchester from other European countries and had been unable to find work. One person had become homeless during the process of moving from the asylum support system to mainstream benefits when they were granted leave to remain, while another person had been evicted as a result of the changes to Housing Benefit.

The length of time people had been on the streets before they came into contact with NSNO varied from three nights to three months. Those who had slept rough in the past and those who had been sleeping rough for some weeks fell somewhere in between the two categories of someone entirely new to the street and an entrenched rough sleeper. This suggests that despite a clear remit for the project (i.e. new rough sleepers) at an operational level people do not always fit neatly into a particular categorization.

Accessing support

The process by which people were referred to NSNO GM for support varied. Nine out of 13 service users were referred to NSNO by service providers. Seven out of those nine had been referred by drop-in centres, while the remaining two were referred by the job centre and the hospital. Two people contacted the project themselves after they were informed about it from a member of the public. One person was referred directly by a member of the public and one person encountered NSNO GM staff on the streets while they were carrying out early morning outreach activities.

This suggests that NSNO GM is well known by service providers in Greater Manchester, who play an essential role in signposting people to further support. In addition, given that three out of the 13 people interviewed were referred by the public, this suggests that NSNO GM's awareness raising and publicity to promote the project and the phone line has been successful.

Service users spoke positively about the quick response time from NSNO GM once they had been referred. For example, all 13 people stated that NSNO contacted them within 24 hours of a referral being made, and indicated that they were accommodated very quickly afterwards. Many expressed surprise at the speed at which the project was able to link them to accommodation, particularly those people who had previous experiences of homelessness and had faced significant barriers in getting support with accommodation in the past. As one service user states:

"They asked me to come and see them that day. I went round to see them and within hours they had me housed in 394 Project" (Doug, service user)

Accessing emergency accommodation

Although NSNO GM provided service users with somewhere to stay quickly, the interviews suggested that the project faced some challenges with regards to finding bed spaces in emergency accommodation. One service user, for example, stated that they had to spend another night on the street before they were accommodated, whilst another spoke of being offered a place in the 'sit up' – a room at the Riverside emergency accommodation Project 394 where people can sleep on camp beds or inflatable mattresses until a room becomes free. He stayed there for three nights before being given a room.

Furthermore, five out of the 13 service users interviewed, were initially accommodated in hotels, bed and breakfast or hostels due to a lack of beds in emergency accommodation across Greater Manchester. The time that service users spent in this type of accommodation varied from a few days to up to three weeks. Although, all those interviewed stated that having some kind of accommodation was better than sleeping on the streets, the interviews suggested that this type of interim accommodation was often poor quality. As one service user highlighted:

“Actually the hostel in [name of place], I was there a few days. It wasn’t ideal. I was sleeping on the floor or on the sofa with two other gentlemen. But I was satisfied. It was better than the street. They did their best for me”. (Yasha, service user)

Support beyond emergency accommodation

Many service users also spoke very positively about the additional support they received from NSNO GM which went beyond the provision of accommodation. This reflected the diversity of need and the varying levels of support required by service users but also highlighted a commitment to achieving longer term solutions for service users.

Interviews with service users indicated that while some felt able to navigate the housing system and resolve their own issues once their immediate accommodation needs had been met, others needed more support, particularly when it came to finding accommodation. It was apparent from the interviews that in many cases, NSNO GM linked clients to key workers within different emergency accommodation settings who then supported them to move on to private or socially rented accommodation. In some cases, the NSNO GM team continued to provide support and worked in partnership with other organisations to resolve specific client issues.

One service user, for example, talked about the important role that NSNO GM workers played in negotiating for a lower deposit with a private landlord and the help that they received in accessing a church resettlement grant to help pay the deposit.

“I was put in touch with some housing agents. But the barrier I had was a £400 deposit. In the past it’s been like £1,000 and a month’s rent in advance and a month’s deposit and references and all that sort of thing...It’s really surprising to only need a £400 deposit. I think [name of NSNO worker] explained my situation and I was a pretty decent chap...Also there was a church fund⁴ for like once you leave here you get £250 amount... It was amazing the way they did it so quick. I was really appreciative of it” (Steven, Service user)

In another case, NSNO GM worked intensively with a client with complex needs who was at risk of rough sleeping. This individual came in to contact with NSNO GM when they were living in a caravan. They had a history of severe and enduring mental illness, and at the time were experiencing serious mental distress. NSNO GM linked them to a mental health team and through extensive advocacy was successful in securing a tenancy that was appropriate for their needs, but also in a geographical area where they could continue to access the social support that they had built up. Throughout the period that NSNO GM worked with this client, staff members remained in contact and offered vital emotional support in addition to the practical help needed to resolve their situation:

⁴ Believed to refer to Church Housing Trust which is a charity dedicated to the rehabilitation and resettlement of homeless people of all ages and backgrounds.

"I remember [name of staff member] and [name of staff member]...the reason I remember is their names. It's because they were the only two consistent people constantly on my case. [Name of staff member] would ring up even if it was in between sorting out stuff, which she sorted lots of stuff out. She would ring up to see how I was eating and stuff like that. Do you know what I mean? It was just a consistent service. It was crucial and vital. Because of that I started to engage a little bit more". (Beth, service user)

Beth's account illustrates the importance of having consistency in terms of staffing in order to be able to build relationships and trust with service users. Overall, the approach of the workers at NSNO GM, and their willingness to listen and offer help beyond the initial support period was commented on by nearly all of the service users interviewed. As one respondent highlighted:

"All the members of staff they were all polite. I'm grateful for their generosity. They always made sure that I felt all right and that I was comfortable, that's the word I was looking for, comfortable. They made sure I felt comfortable and that everything I needed was there" (James, service user)

Some of the service users who are now in temporary accommodation commented on the fact that they still occasionally received calls from staff at NSNO GM to check on their well-being. There was a feeling that they could still go to NSNO GM and ask for help if they needed to. Indeed, a small number of respondents stated that they were unhappy in their current accommodation and were planning to contact NSNO GM and ask for help to move somewhere else. Another service user who had recently been granted leave to remain in the UK and who had limited English language skills stated that they did not understand the housing system and that NSNO GM helped them to understand letters, as well as check the progress of their housing claim.

The extent to which the NSNO GM team was called upon to provide support beyond the original remit of the project raises some important issues in relation to the availability of support for people moving on from emergency accommodation. In Beth's case, for instance, while she was receiving some assistance from the local authority, it was the involvement of NSNO GM that enabled her to access the appropriate level of support in order to secure a tenancy.

Support to maintain accommodation

The numbers of people that NSNO GM helps to move off the streets and who then manage to stay in accommodation or secure and maintain a tenancy was highlighted by NSNO GM project representatives as a key indicator of success. All of the service users who were interviewed for the evaluation had managed to maintain their accommodation and were either living in temporary housing or had managed to secure a long term tenancy.

Findings from service user interviews indicated that coming in to contact with NSNO GM and the support they received marked the beginning of a more positive period in their lives. For those who were new to the streets, NSNO GM provided them with the help they needed to get back on track, while for others with more complex needs, support from NSNO GM was the first step on the road to recovery. Many confirmed that their lives could be in a very different place were it not for the assistance they had received. For one service user, the quick response from the NSNO GM team and their commitment to helping him move forward and secure a tenancy was critical:

"It's an awful lot better, because I've got stability now. I can have my daughter every weekend. It's just massively better. It's altered things, how they dealt with things so quickly. It could have gone wrong, rapidly. I don't think I would have stuck around for months. I would

probably have just got some money together and taken off somewhere, really. That probably wouldn't have ended well, either. It only lasts so long". (Steven, service user)

Another service user highlighted just how important NSNO GMs intervention had been at a time of crisis and how this had allowed them to start re-building their life:

"I've always said that if I hadn't been found then, I wouldn't be here. I really wouldn't be here. I don't think I could have survived another two nights out there. I was absolutely broken, absolutely broken... Now I'm involved with the church there is some hope and I do quite a lot of work for them as well. I actually started a job last Saturday". (Phil, service user)

For one person, assistance from NSNO GM was a lifeline:

"Basically, it got me off the streets, really. I'm 64 next month and I don't think I would survive a winter out. I suppose potentially they saved my life haven't they" (Antony, service user)

Overall, the findings from the interviews with service users appear to emphasise the unique focus of NSNO GM and outline the importance of early intervention in tackling rough sleeping. Without this type of targeted intervention, it was felt there would be little support available for those not considered to be in priority need (see Glossary and Chapter One for definition of priority need):

"I slept rough before in 2008...I was living in [name of place] at the time. I went to town hall and they were no use. I found out that a flat had become available and I went to the DHSS, the Job Centre and I told them there was a flat and I got myself off the street, really. There is very little help for homeless people, you know... The people [NSNO GM] have supported me. Literally, the only people who have supported me at all. Certainly, local authorities haven't at all. You are just banging your head on a wall". (Antony, service user)

4. Findings: Key stakeholders

This chapter presents an analysis of key findings from interviews carried out with key stakeholders. These included five organisations that work with NSNO GM and three NSNO GM representatives. Analysis focuses on NSNO GM service delivery and operations and explores key strengths as well as areas for further development. While the evaluation focused on both NSNO GM and the Street Buddies initiative, the stakeholders focused primarily on the NSNO project in their interviews. As such, the analysis in this chapter is only able to briefly discuss views on Street Buddies. Please note that all identifiers have been removed from the quotes to protect the anonymity of the respondents.

Operations

NSNO GM operations were considered by stakeholder organisations to be efficient and effective. The presence of a central point from which the NSNO GM strategy was delivered and the team could be contacted was seen to work particularly well from both a strategic and operational perspective. One stakeholder organisation commented that the consistent approach adopted by NSNO GM had benefited the strategic work taking place with regards to strengthening partnership working around homelessness.

Furthermore, stakeholder organisations that were service providers and therefore made referrals to NSNO remarked upon the efficient and professional service provided by both the referral line and the outreach team, who demonstrated a commitment to responding to referrals as quickly as possible. As one respondent highlights:

“In terms of follow up, what we’ve found is yes, it’s very efficient in terms of getting call backs and the staff are up for sorting things out... As a service, I think it is quite straightforward.”

However, one stakeholder highlighted concerns about people still being on the streets even though they had been referred to NSNO GM. This raised an issue around what happened to the referrals if the outreach team were unable to find a person. As suggested below, this issue related to the difficulties in finding and keeping in touch with the client group:

“One of the things I find difficult is you say to people, your referral has gone through and we’ve spoken to somebody and they will say, we are going to come and find you. But a lot of times it’s relying on them having a mobile phone to contact to say, well, they can’t get hold of them and therefore they are not found and therefore it just drifts away as a referral I think then... In some ways, I think that service could be more of a focal point for saying, let’s keep people on the radar”

The challenges in finding people on the streets and being able to verify their rough sleeping status⁵ was also acknowledged and described by an NSNO GM representative:

“It’s not unknown to have ten names to look for and not finding any of them, because of a combination of reasons. Often the description of the person is vague. Sometimes if they don’t have a mobile phone it makes it more difficult or if they don’t answer the phone...That makes things very difficult”

Accessing emergency accommodation

Central to NSNO GM is the ability to link service users to emergency accommodation in the different local authorities across Greater Manchester. This was recommended as an important area for development in the evaluation report produced for NSNO GM's first six months in operation (see Chapter 1). Although NSNO GM has been largely successful in doing this, a lack of appropriate accommodation was identified by both the NSNO GM representatives and other service providers as one of the major barriers to achieving the project aims. The NSNO GM representatives drew particular attention to the lack of clear pathways to emergency accommodation provision in certain local authorities. This was deemed to be in part due to the varying numbers of rough sleepers in different areas, the extent to which there was acknowledgement of the presence of rough sleepers in the area, and subsequently the existence of services to meet their needs. An interview with a strategic stakeholder suggested that commitment from local authorities to the NSNO GM approach at a strategic level had not translated into the necessary provision on the ground:

“Local authorities [are] providing a strong commitment with No Second Night Out and that’s not translated into the accommodation provision on the front line...The main issue, certainly

5 NSNO GM uses a verification process by which they must meet with a person and verify they are rough sleeping before being able to offer them support and accommodation. This ensures that provision is targeted at the appropriate people.

from our point of view, has been the accommodation pathways...some pathways are very, very clear and very well developed, whereas in other areas it's not always clear where the accommodation is and in some cases it's not been able to provide enough accommodation...Sometimes the teams have had to rely on inappropriate short term accommodation like bed and breakfasts"

The NSNO GM representatives also echoed these concerns when describing the challenges NSNO faced in getting local authorities to understand the project aims and to develop accommodation pathways. However, it was suggested that this had become easier as the project evolved:

"The first kind of six months was very much about trying to kind of identify the pathway of each local authority...In some areas, there was nothing - there still isn't any accommodation. In some areas last year [they] didn't have anything and we now have a much stronger pathway. It's like with anything, its development"

Clearly the lack of available emergency accommodation for NSNO clients is part of a much broader issue relating to an overall lack of provision. One service provider stated simply that there were 'more clients than there were beds', which presents difficulties with all services involved in addressing homelessness, not just NSNO.

Driving the prevention agenda

A number of stakeholders commented positively on the pro-active approach adopted by the project, whereby outreach workers go out on to the streets and find rough sleepers, as well as promoting the service amongst organisations and the general public. As one stakeholder highlights:

"The key thing has got to be going out and finding people...Actually dealing with people who are out there on the streets and trying to work on that solution...I think if you are coming at it with that focus of the No Second Night Out approach, that you are picking somebody up and saying, we are going to get you somewhere to sleep while we get you accommodated and then you are really pushing the process, whereas a lot of the people that we see are either waiting or they have been found not to be priority and it's like, you know, off you go. They are left with nothing. It's like driving that agenda, I think"

This statement reiterates the comments made by service users in the previous chapter about the importance of interventions that focus on people who would otherwise be unable to access any support.

Flexible working practices

As findings from the previous chapter highlight, the people that the NSNO GM outreach team encounter and aim to assist are diverse. This means that flexible working practices were considered vital to the project, reflecting Riverside's broader commitment to tackling homelessness and rough sleeping amongst all groups. For example, the NSNO GM team encountered a significant number of entrenched rough sleepers who were not engaging with services and were involved in activities such as street drinking, street drug use and begging. As a result, the Street Buddies outreach team was set up to support people with more complex needs to engage with services and to access accommodation when appropriate.

Furthermore, it was apparent from the findings that NSNO GM was also providing support, albeit of a limited nature, to people who were not technically eligible for assistance from the project. This

included people from certain migrant groups, such as Romanian and Bulgarian nationals who had no recourse to public funds. NSNO were able to sign post these individuals to the 'sit-up' – a room at Project 394, the emergency accommodation based at NSNO where people can stay on the camp beds for a few nights, as well as access information and advice. Similarly, NSNO GM had provided short term support to couples who were not eligible for the service to access short term Bed and Breakfast accommodation as a way of allowing them extra time to access support from elsewhere.

These findings reiterate the commitment of NSNO GM and Riverside to working with diverse people with varying needs but more broadly highlights that there are still people, such as certain migrant groups for whom there is no support or provision. This remains a barrier to tackling homelessness and rough sleeping.

Partnership working

The challenges of finding and maintaining contact with people on the streets, highlighted above, were identified by stakeholder organisations as an aspect of NSNO GM's work which would benefit from better communication and partnership working between different service providers. It was suggested for example, that clients could be more easily linked back to NSNO GM if when they appeared at a drop-in, there was better communication between the organisations.

The importance of working in partnership to tackle rough sleeping and the need for effective communication in order to identify rough sleepers has been actively acknowledged by NSNO GM. For example, in order to further facilitate partnerships between NSNO GM and other organisations, the project sent an outreach worker to a local drop-in centre one morning a week to provide support and to pick up appropriate referrals from the centre. This was described positively by one drop-in manager:

“It was good for the staff team to be able to work aside them... if you had somebody that you thought was vulnerable, but you [weren't] quite sure whether they met their needs, [NSNO] would have a chat with them. They had their own room. It was quite nice, because it was in our environment where people are used to our environment. We would say, this is a friend of ours. Have a chat with them and see what they can do for you or what they can't do for you. That was a good relationship. The clients felt safe, because they [were] in our environment”

In addition, NSNO GM set up the Greater Manchester Rough Sleepers Forum (GMRSF). The forum aims to encourage greater partnership working between organisations and across geographical areas, through improved communication, information sharing and mutual support. It is a space which brings both front line and strategic partners together. GMRSF was referred to positively by a number of stakeholders, and perceived as necessary for workers at all levels. Stakeholders referred to the importance of communication between services on a number of occasions, with NSNO being regarded as another potential facilitator for partnership working. As one stakeholder stated:

“From our point of view, we are somewhere that can end up working very much in isolation. And yet, a lot of the people that fall into all these services, particularly, No Second Night Out are sitting in drop in centres like ours. With something like No Second Night Out and the Rough Sleepers Forum, it gives us another avenue to sort of communicate and say, this is what we are seeing. It's been useful”

In general, comments from stakeholders indicated that NSNO GM has an important role to play as a focal point through which collaborative working could be fostered. It was felt that by having regular

and effective contact with voluntary sector organisations, local councils and housing providers, clients could be better supported to access accommodation. NSNO GM's work in facilitating this process was acknowledged and welcomed.

Capacity building

The project also undertook work around the provision of employment and volunteering opportunities for people who have previously been homeless through its volunteering program and GROW traineeship. This was highlighted as a strength of the project which had benefits not only for the people involved but also the service users that they worked with. Both the volunteer and GROW trainee remarked on the useful training and support they had received whilst working on the project and the confidence that working with NSNO had given them. There was also a sense that people's past experiences were recognised by the NSNO project as an important strength in their approach to working with homeless people. As a NSNO volunteer said:

"I've got a lot to offer. I've got a lot of experience, which is very extensive. If I can pass it on it makes life a bit better."

As highlighted in Chapter 1, this rapid evaluation also aimed to explore the work of the Street Buddies initiative, which recruits people who have been rough sleepers to mentor individuals who are currently rough sleeping and engaging in street activity. As such, all stakeholders (outside the NSNO GM team) were asked about their understanding of the work of the Street Buddies outreach team. One respondent felt that Street Buddies was an important 'bridge' between services and homeless people:

"The Street Buddies is more about working with people that are more entrenched. Just about engaging with people, really. They then can put people in touch with services or even just be a bridge. They are most useful as a bridge between a service that is already there and trying to engage with someone and the people who are not really willing or ready to engage"

While the interviews with non-NSNO stakeholders suggested an overall awareness of Street Buddies and an understanding that the focus of the Street Buddies outreach team was distinctly different to the preventative agenda of NSNO GM, there appeared to be confusion amongst stakeholders about the work of Street Buddies, where it fits into the broader NSNO GM project and whether or not it was a separate project. Indeed, there was a suggestion that Street Buddies should be entirely separate from NSNO GM.

5. Conclusions

The aim of this rapid evaluation was to provide Riverside with a greater understanding of the effectiveness of NSNO GM and Street Buddies. This chapter brings together the findings of the interviews with stakeholders and service users to provide some concluding comments.

NSNO GM has been successful in developing a fast, efficient and responsive service which has largely been able to achieve its aims of responding to referrals within 24 hours and supporting to people to find a safe place to stay. However the shortage of emergency accommodation in certain areas in Greater Manchester is a significant challenge for the team.

Overall, NSNO GM appears to have been successful in working with the target group of people who are new to the streets. However, it has also had to work flexibly in order to meet the needs of people who do not necessarily meet the criteria i.e. people who have previous experiences of homelessness, people who have been sleeping rough for longer than one night, and people with complex needs. The ability of the NSNO GM team to work with a diversity of people represents one of its major strengths. However, the diverse and sometimes urgent needs of the homeless people that NSNO GM encounters mean that the project can be required to go beyond its remit. NSNO has demonstrated a commitment to supporting service users to finding longer term solutions to homelessness but findings suggests that there is a lack of support available from other services after someone has been placed in emergency accommodation.

Service users highlighted the importance of providing one trusted point of contact to which they could go to for support. NSNO GM's consistency in terms of staffing and support was identified as a major strength which contributed to a positive and effective experience for service users. There is however, a need for continued partnership working between agencies to ensure that clients receive the appropriate level of support from the agencies best placed to provide it. In response to the recommendations of the its first evaluation, The project has worked hard to develop partnerships with local authorities to develop clearer accommodation pathways across Greater Manchester. This needs continued development as well as commitment from local authorities to improve provision.

NSNO GM has an important role to play as the focal point for partnership working between organisations working with the homeless and those at risk of becoming homeless. There is a need for more joined up working and communication between service providers so that they can provide collaborative support and keep track of clients. NSNO GM's efforts to facilitate more effective partnership working have been welcomed by organisations working with homeless people in Greater Manchester.

NSNO GM's commitment to capacity building through volunteering and GROW traineeships with people who have experienced homelessness is an example of good practice which enhances the service they deliver and provides important opportunities for volunteers and trainees to develop new skills and experience. Similarly, the Street Buddies Outreach team has a role to play in engaging with more entrenched rough sleepers, acting as a bridge between services and encouraging people to re-engage. However there was a lack of evidence from the data with regards to its impact which is unsurprising given its relatively recent introduction in the area.

Findings suggest that NSNO GM has developed significantly in the past two years. It has responded pro-actively and creatively to the challenges it faces and has demonstrated a strong commitment to preventing rough sleeping across Greater Manchester through the development of strategic

partnerships with local authorities and agencies but also through effective and responsive service delivery.

Finally, stakeholders who form a part of the NSNO GM delivery team reported that they are currently working within a very challenging environment. Service providers state they have seen a rise in the number of people who are homeless and many people in this situation are being attracted to large cities such as Manchester. This puts pressure on front line services that are already struggling often due to funding cuts. NSNO GM plays a unique role in its ability to prevent rough sleeping and therefore to relieve pressure on other services. However while this is a strength, it also presents a major challenge.